

BUILDING AWARENESS AND CREATING LONG-TERM CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

Microsoft® Developer Network (MSDN) Virtual Labs and Webcasts educate viewers on the latest developer tools from Microsoft. Through these technical webcasts, experts on Microsoft technology demonstrate Microsoft products, and answer questions from viewers while they get hands on experience through the virtual labs. Exsilio Solutions was responsible for marketing MSDN when the idea of Microsoft experts as superheroes was born.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

The MSDN team needed a marketing campaign aimed at the developer community to drive awareness about MSDN Virtual Labs and Webcasts and increase content consumption. The developer audience is an especially savvy group, and marketing to them through traditional methods can often times prove challenging. The MSDN Virtual Labs and Webcasts are highly technical, meant to drive adoption, awareness and technical learning on Microsoft Developer Platform tools and technologies. With an always increasing number of technologies and content for developers, Microsoft needed a new outbound communication approach. It was obvious that the traditional model of content being fed to the developer community needed to shift to one where developers would take the initiative to explore what's new at Microsoft.

SOLUTION

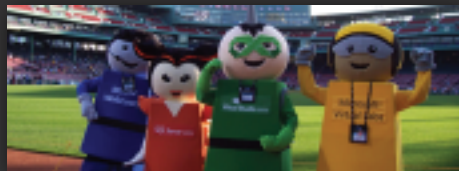
The new MSDN Webcast Series campaign started with the concept that the MSDN Webcast presenters were "heroes." Exsilio was given the opportunity to assist the MSDN team with promoting the virtual labs and webcasts; this is when Source Force, a team of four Microsoft developer superheroes, came to life. The Source Force heroes each represent a different category of developer tools and services: Virtual Lab Dude, MSDN Webcast Guy, SQL Server Gal and Visual Studio Guy. These characters engage the developer audience in a unique way, through their adventures fighting coding mishaps.

First, a "coming soon" campaign website was developed, with mystery characters. Next was the concept for a monthly promotion unveiling a different character each month. Over the next four months, those who attended three webcasts and/or virtual labs in that month each got a plush toy of the new character. Based on the success of this four month campaign, a follow-up "second chance" additional four month campaign was launched.

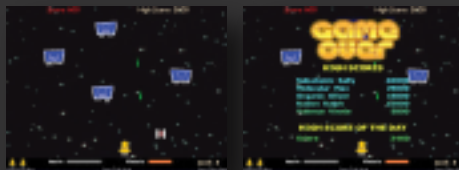
To round out the campaign Exsilio built out four animated cartoons, a video game featuring the heroes, coordinated live in-person appearances of the Source Force at developer events.

“...demonstrated very sharp, strong developed skills from both a development and IT perspective... drove some of the biggest reach numbers of the year for our business group.”

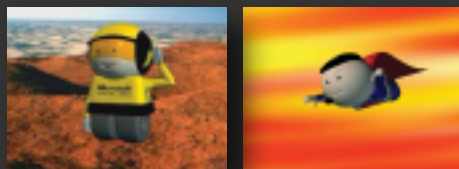
Georgeo Pulikkathara, Sr Marketing Manager, Microsoft



Source Fource Character Costumes



Source Fource Video Game



Source Fource Animated Video



Source Fource Website & Toys

RESULTS

The Microsoft developer community had been re-energized, and the campaign went viral; the non-traditional marketing ideas had worked. Members of the developer community reacted very positively, in their own ways towards the Source Fource. From the initial concept of the characters during the coming soon campaign, the developer audience immediately began generating buzz around the Source Fource.

From a numbers perspective, the video game webcast series was the greatest attended series the program had ever had. Overall audience attendance for the MSDN Webcast Series went from 550K views in the previous year, to over 1.2M views, cruising past their 800K target, while evaluation response rates improved to over 70%.

The MSDN Webcast program had pumped new blood through the Developer audience so much so that additional one-off characters started being created and other teams started using the Source Fource as a vehicle for their efforts via the new moniker "The Source Fource and Friends" for many years after.

SOLUTION DETAILS

Solution Timeline:

November 2005- June 2007

Exsilio Services Leveraged:

- Project Management
- Branding & Campaign Management
- Exsilio Development Cycle
- Creative Services
- Web Design & Development
- Marketing Promotions

Benefits:

- Drive Developer Content Consumption
- Build Online Community Loyalty
- Market to Non-traditional Audiences

Website:

<http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/aa740358>

Client:

Microsoft Developer Network

Location:

Redmond, WA

Exsilio Solutions is a full service marketing and technology partner.

Whether your business needs a marketing, software development or creative solution, our team adapts to your goals and objectives. We're proud to have built a strong reputation as a true partner; we approach each project as part of a larger client relationship, one which fosters growth and success.

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